

# CHAMBERS'S EDINBURGH JOURNAL

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## WHY IS THE SEA SALT?

Why is the sea salt?

What a question!—and what a time and place for it! You never before sat on turf so green as this, Marion—bordering the yellow sands of a bay so small, so delicately curved, so beautiful, so lonely. See, on one hand, but too far off to disturb the idea of solitude—yet near enough to leave unbroken the ties that connect us with the humanities of life—is a little, rustic, old-fashioned town, clustering itself upon a peninsula which stretches eagerly out into the sea, as if determined to obtain by right the name of an island, which it only enjoys by courtesy. On the other hand are the green, swelling shoulders of the bay, behind which we see rising in the clear air some thin filmy smoke, which tells of the nestling place of that beautiful village, with the most beautiful of names—Aberdour. Behind us, secluding and hemming in our little bay from the world, solemn and austere as the convent walls that enclose some charming nun, is a broad belt of forest, traversed by hermit paths, leading to hidden fountains, holy enough to wash away from the soul the foulest stains of the world. And before us, Marion, look at that expanse of calm blue water, whose ripples kiss the yellow sand at our feet, but whose farther edge is lost in a silvery haze, above which rise dim towers and castled steepes, and beyond them shadowy precipices, and a towering seat where King Arthur himself may seem to look down from his throne upon the world of romance!

But why is the sea salt? Tush! Because it licks up the saline particles of the earth it washes; or because there are mountains of rock-salt resembling colossal lumps of sugar-candy in its depths, which melt so gradually that they and the world will be used up together; or for any other nonsensical reason which the ignorance of science pleases. This is not a time or a place for such fables. But if you will have knowledge, let us take it from the men of old, to whom truth was handed down by tradition. How should we know so well as they who were born so much nearer the event? The venerable Edda tells everything in a page that modern philosophy is breaking its heart to get at. It does not take up a tumbler of the water, and hold it to the light, and boil it, and evaporate it, and pretend to discover the secret from the dregs, like an old woman reading a teacup. It relates the circumstances historically, naming distinctly the individuals and the places, and explaining the reasons and the result. What more would you have? Nothing is wanted on the part of the learner but faith. Listen believably, and you will understand in five minutes how it came to pass that the water of the sea turned salt.

Before the reign of Frodi, a near descendant of Odin, the ocean was fresh; but that powerful king of Got-

land (called in modern times Denmark) was fond of novelties and experiments. In his dominions there were two millstones, the upper and the nether, forming an engine of extraordinary power, if it had been only possible to set it going. No man, however, was strong enough to turn it; and steam not being yet invented, nor even water or wind power, they stood where they were—vast, ponderous, and motionless, a marvel to the country.

The owner of this mill, whose name was Hengikapt, which signifies Hanging-Chops, presented it to King Frodi, telling him that it possessed the property of grinding out—grist or no grist—anything and everything ordered by the grinder. But the gift was a mere curiosity, only fit to be put up in some public place to be looked at, and wondered at gratis; for nations had not got the length of charging themselves so much a head for seeing their own monuments. So Frodi was little the better for his acquisition, till he had the good fortune to stumble upon the only individuals in the world who could act as millers to these extraordinary stones. This occurred when he was on a visit to the king of Sweden, at whose court he obtained two female slaves, Fenia and Menia by name, who could do—nobody could tell what they could not do.

As soon as he got home he tried them at the mill, and, lo! round went the huge stones, as if by a hundred horse-power.

'Grind gold!' cried he, and Gotland was at once a California.

'Grind tranquillity!' and every man took the pledge, and subscribed to the Peace Society.

'Grind good-luck!' and Frodi might have been taken for a colonial minister, so prudent, so rational, so prosperous did he become all on a sudden. But, alas! the more he got out of his charmed mill, the more he wanted. 'Grind this! grind that! grind the other thing!' was his constant cry. 'Grind, grind!' when he lay down to rest at night; 'Grind, grind!' when he rose in the morning. He made a rule at last that the female slaves should never rest at one time longer than the cuckoo does between his notes. Then sang the female slaves the famous Grotta song which is still known in Scandinavia. It described the services they performed, the ceaseless fatigue they endured, the sleep that every now and then overpowered them at their task, the pain with which they started from a repose not longer than the intervals between the cuckoo's song.

But Frodi was inexorable in his covetousness. 'Grind this! grind that! grind the other thing!' cried he. 'Grind—grind!' And at length the female slaves, finding remonstrance vain, and warning unheeded, ground war and distress. That very night there landed in Gotland a sea-king whose name was Geysing, who

marched direct upon the palace of Frodi, plundered it of its treasures, slew the unhappy king himself, and carrying off the mill and its slaves, set sail with his booty.

Served him right? True, Marion. The lessons of history are never to be despised. For my part I would have been satisfied with grinding gold, peace, good-luck—

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Polkas, operas, dress? Yes; and love, smiles, kisses—

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Hush, never mind? Very well. The poor brother went away in dismay, thinking he had far to go, and he asked everybody he met the road to *hush!* The place was not so far off, however, as he thought, nor the way so difficult to find, and he met with many obliging per-

sons who were very willing to direct him. When the shades of evening began to descend, he reached an immense palace illuminated from top to bottom, and he said to himself, Surely this is the place? He was right: for in a shed close by there was an old man with a long white beard splitting wood for the Yule feast, and he told him, in reply to his question, that that was assuredly his destination.

‘Go in boldly,’ said he, ‘for you are not empty handed: you will find many there anxious to buy your bone, and to give a good price for it; but take care that you accept of nothing in exchange but the mill behind the door.’

The poor man accordingly knocked, the door flew open, and a whole legion of the inmates crowded round him, bidding eagerly for his bone.

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The gentlemen were at first surprised, then indignant, then grieved. They were free traders. It was their business to buy in the cheapest, and sell in the dearest market they could; and although determined to have the shank-bone, they were loath to make so valuable a return. The poor brother, however, was as resolved as they; and the end of it was that the arrangement he insisted upon was agreed to, and he carried away the mill.

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‘Make it grind you your dinner, or anything you will,’ replied the old man.

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‘Where in all the world have you been?’ said he. ‘I have been behind the door!’ replied his brother; and that was all he could get out of him. The other importuned him to sell his mill, coming day after day, and increasing his offer, as he saw it grinding all manner of things; till the possessor, tired of turning it, appeared to relent; and he at length sold the wonderful mill for a large sum of money.

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rich brother, who on the following morning told his wife to go out and spread the hay after the reapers, promising to prepare breakfast himself. Her back was no sooner turned than he shut the door, placed the mill upon the table, turned it violently round, and trembling with expectation, commanded it to grind herrings and porridge. And the herrings and porridge came till every dish in the house was full. Then the stream overflowed the table, and then the floor; the unskillful miller turning the handle in every possible way to endeavour to stop it. All was to no purpose. On flowed the torrent; and when, afraid of being drowned in the kitchen, he rushed into the parlour, it followed him there, and he had barely time to escape by the window, pursued by an ocean of breakfast. He never stopped till he reached his brother's house.

"Take it back!—take it back!" cried he, "or the whole parish will be suffocated in herrings and porridge!"

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A bargain was made; and the cunning grinder, who had foreseen this result, was now a rich man, and had the mill to boot. He built him a house—or rather a palace—on the sea-shore; and in the wantonness of his wealth covered the walls with plates of gold, till it shone far out to sea.

Among the mariners who sailed in near the shore to see this marvel was one whose trade it was to peril his life in carrying through dangerous seas the rock-salt that was then so valuable a commodity.

"Can your mill work salt?" said he.

"That it can," replied the man of the golden palace. Whereupon the mariner bade higher and higher for the treasure, till its owner reflecting, like a sensible person, that he had already a superfluity of the good things of the world, and that a mill manufactured in a certain place of evil repute must at one time or other work evil to the grinder, consented to sell it for a very large sum of money. The new purchaser, overjoyed at his success, and laughing in his sleeve at the simplicity of the seller, carried off his prize at once, and was no sooner on the open sea than he set up the wonderful mill, and turning it quickly round, commanded it to grind salt. I need not add, Marion, that it obeyed only too well; that it continued to obey long after the bones of its luckless owner were bleaching at the bottom; and that at this moment it still keeps grinding, grinding, with such effect that, notwithstanding the rivers of fresh water it receives, the sea remains salt, and will remain salt for ever.

Not so good as the other? No more it is: but there is a gleam of truth here and there in it for all that. Do you not think, dear friend, that there are times and places when the faith is young and strong—when giants are not monsters, fairies not preternatural, and tallismans not impossible? Do you not sometimes feel as if, like the goddess of old, you had bathed in the Fountain of Youth, and returned to the thoughts and associations of your unwithered years? Believe me that fountain is no dream of poetry, no invention of romance. Its waters float in the air you even now inhale; they cool your fevered brow; they reanimate your drooping heart; and, seen through this enchanted medium, the lovely picture before us is a realisation of the visions that once haunted your young bosom of the distant world. But a shade has fallen upon the scene: a stronger breath ruffles here and there, as if with a dream, the slumbers of the Firth; the distant city looms out more sternly from the opposite shore; the clustering

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from the 'Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medical Science' of that day, which gave an abstract of Reichenbach's first paper. As the author has since then not merely amended that paper, but has published a second, embracing a wide extension of his researches on one part of the subject, we are enabled now to offer a much more full and explicit account of the new department of science thus called into being.

We shall first quote the author's own statement of the primary observation lying at the root of his researches:—

'The time-honoured observation, that the magnet has a sensible action on the human organism, is neither a lie, nor an imposture, nor a superstition, as many philosophers now-a-days erroneously suppose and declare it to be, but a well-founded fact, a physico-physiological law of nature, which loudly calls on our attention. It is a tolerably easy thing, and everywhere practicable, to convince ourselves of the accuracy of this statement; for everywhere people may be found whose sleep is more or less disturbed by the moon, or who suffer from nervous disorders. Almost all of these perceive very distinctly the peculiar action of a magnet, when a pass is made with it from the head downwards. Even more numerous are the healthy and active persons who feel the magnet very vividly; many others feel it less distinctly; many hardly perceive it; and finally, the majority do not perceive it at all. All those who perceive this effect, and who seem to amount to a fourth or even a third of the people in this part of Europe, are here included under the general term "Sensitives."

The sensations thus perceived are of two kinds. One kind are analogous to the feelings of heat and cold, but not identical with these. A cool magnetic feeling is at the same time refreshing and comfortable, a source of the greatest delight and enjoyment to the sensitive patient. It is like a fresh cooling breeze after the oppression of sickly warmth, and is evidently of the nature of a wholesome genial stimulus to the whole nervous system. The nervous current which it induces must be in the same direction as the currents that sustain the vital functions; it is, in fact, a reinforcement of the living energies dependent on the nervous system. The feeling of warmth, on the other hand, is a feeling of a distressing and uncomfortable kind. It seems connected with an action against the grain, an obstruction to the healthy stream of life. When intense and continued, it produces a severe sense of oppression and stupefaction, going on to fits and convulsions, and giving all the evidences of being extremely unfavourable to the human system. The apparent warmth is thus a sickly, oppressive, and unwholesome warmth, and every sensitive person requires to be protected from the peculiar influence that imparts it, and to be subjected if possible to the influence that causes the opposite feeling of refreshing coolness.

The second class of sensations are those of sight, including luminous flames, sparks, smoke, glow, and varied colours. Sensitive persons can in a dark room see all these appearances about a magnet, or any of the other bodies that have the same power. Baron Reichenbach has investigated these luminous effects with such an amount of care and precision that he can render a distinct and accurate account of each of them; and some of his results we shall be able to lay before our readers.

With reference now to the objects causing these two classes of sensations, the foremost, as already observed, is the magnet in all its forms—natural loadstone, artificial magnet, electro magnet, and lastly, the earth.

If we take a *magnetic bar*, and present the north pole to the body of a sensitive person, and with that pole make downward passes from head to foot (withdrawing the magnet when raising it again, so as to avoid an up-

ward pass), we shall produce the cool and comfortable sensation; we thereby communicate a nervous current, genial and favourable, to the powers of life. But if with the same pole we make exclusively upward passes, we produce the warm and oppressive sensation, or engender a conflict with the healthy activities of the system. This pole, the so-called north pole of the magnet, because its magnetism is the same as the north magnetic pole of the earth. Reichenbach proposes to call *negative*, as respects the new force, the cause of these sensations. If the south pole of the magnet is used, the effects are exactly opposite: the downward pass is warm, the upward cold, and the pole is denominated the *positive* pole as regards this action. The force itself has been termed *Odyle* by the author of these researches—and consequently north magnetism he styles *odyllo-negative*; and south magnetism, *odyllo-positive*.

Such are the respective sensations made by moving up and down the two poles of the magnet. We have no reason to be surprised at this effect after what has been already established on the subject of magnetism. It was a fact ascertained by Faraday, that if a magnet is moved along a wire, it will induce a current of common electricity in that wire; and knowing, as we do, the susceptibility of the human nerves to electric currents, we cannot but admit the possibility, and even the unavoidableness of imparting electric currents to the nerves by magnetic passes. But here the parallelism ceases. Motion is essential to the production of electric currents by a magnet; motion is not essential to the production of odyllic sensations, pleasurable or painful. Odyle, therefore, cannot be mere electricity caused by induction from a magnet: it is a power arising from a magnet in circumstances where electricity is not developed. For this, as well as for many other reasons, the new force, although inherent in all magnets, is not magnetism as usually understood; it is not the force that enables magnets to attract iron, and to develop electric currents by Faraday's magneto-electric machinery.

We have said that magnets exert the odyllic power even without being passed up and down; the following are the facts to prove the assertion:—If a magnet is placed in the right hand of a sensitive person, it produces one or other of the two sensations according to the direction given to it: if the north pole points up the arm, the cool agreeable sensation is felt; if the south pole is so placed, the feeling is of the warm and painful sort. The earth's magnetism likewise affects the feelings of odyllic sensitives. Their most agreeable position in bed is with the head to the north and feet to the south; a less agreeable position is with the feet to the north and the head to the south; but it seems that the worst position of all is with the head to the west and the feet to the east. This peculiarity is in part explained by the constitution of the human body itself in reference to odyllic currents. It will be seen afterwards that the human system is one of the sources of odyllic power, and that the two hands are the points where the power is strongest. An axis of power lies across the body, having the two hands for its poles, and the circulation by this axis is more intense than by the axis of the body itself from head to foot. Now when the patient lies west and east, the right hand is towards the south and the left hand to the north; but this is in opposition to the directions that give the pleasant feeling, for the right hand ought to be north and the left hand south. It must, however, be admitted that this portion of the subject, with reference to the concourse of the currents from a magnet without and from the body within, is not made so clear as could be desired.

To show decisively that it is not to magnetism exclusively that this new force belongs, Baron Reichenbach proceeds next to point out the efficiency of *crystals* in causing the same feelings and sensations. When he took a large crystal of a pure and homogeneous structure—calcareous spar or rock crystal, for example—and

stroked a sensitive person with it, the same feelings of coolness or warmth were produced according to the end used. When laid in the hand of an extremely susceptible patient, it excited involuntary contraction, attracted the hand, caused it to become clenched, and to grasp the crystal with a spasm. The line of force lies along the optic axis of the crystal, and the opposite ends of the axis have opposite polar effects. Thus the odyllic force is something common to magnets and pure crystals. Irregular crystals, such as granular crystalline limestone, compact quartz, or loaf sugar, are inert, evidently in consequence of their irregularity; that is, they are made up of a mass of small crystals not in line, but pointing in all directions, and having thus no one uniform axis of power. The evolution of light during the process of crystallisation is a fact long recognised by chemists, and may be connected with the luminosity which they present to sensitive patients.

The property of crystallisation being thus associated with odyllic manifestations, it became desirable to ascertain if there were any other of the permanent peculiarities of material bodies that yielded the same power. After experimenting with many hundreds of different substances, the author came to the conclusion that bodies possessed of strong chemical affinities had, by virtue of this endowment, odyllic characters. The odyllic power is thus pretty general property of matter, associated in the first place with the crystalline structure, and in the second place with the chemical character of bodies. Crystals, like magnets, are *polar*—each individual crystal having both kinds of force lodged within itself: but the bodies that act in virtue of their chemical affinities possess only one of the kinds. It is to be remarked that this new force, associated with crystallisation and chemical affinity, is manifested while these powers are dormant. It seems to inhere, like gravitation, in dead matter; forming a contrast to heat, which is not produced except by a course of rapid changes in the structure of bodies.

This last remark is needed to clear the way for the exposition of the other sources of odyle which we have now to allude to—namely, *heat*, *light*, *electricity*, and *chemical and vital action*. These properties belong to matter, not its dead inactive state, but in the changes that it undergoes, and during the progress of those changes.

According to Reichenbach, a body heated above its natural temperature communicates the cool sensation, while ice produces in an intense degree the warm unpleasant feeling. There is thus a marked contrast between the ordinary sensation of temperature and the extraordinary sensation developed in addition, and felt by sensitives to the magnetic and crystalline force.

*Light* has the same effect as high heat: it produces coolness. On this head the author gives the following experiment:—‘When in bright daylight I brought a lighted wax candle near to Mademoiselle Maix, she perceived a peculiar coolness caused by it. Several candles increased this coolness, so that it pervaded her whole person. I removed, step by step, the candles to the end of two adjoining rooms, together twenty-four feet long. The coolness was at this distance much diminished, but still in some degree perceptible. She described it as obviously analogous to that produced by a wire, the end of which was in sunshine. This observation, which to herself was quite unexpected, led her to remember that, in attending certain ceremonies of the Catholic church at certain periods, and which consist in powerful illumination at night by means of hundreds of wax candles—as in the illumination of the representation of the sepulchres of saints, &c.—she had never been able to hold out. The lights had invariably so chilled her—to the marrow of her bones, as she expressed it—that she was compelled to leave the church. Now, Mademoiselle Maix has suffered during nearly the whole of her life, in a less degree, from the disease which has now become so severe, and is to be regarded as a born sensitive, who

was subject to the sensations peculiar to that state at every period of her life, even when she seemed healthy, and was able to walk about. This peculiar effect on her of light from distances at which the radiant heat could only have been very feeble indeed, producing, besides, an action on the nerves exactly opposite to that of heat, was strongly felt by her at all times, and at a period when no one suspected that it could indicate any morbid state.’

Knowing the connection between magnetism and electricity—they being in fact one and the same power in different circumstances—it was to be expected that both would have like properties in reference to odyle, and accordingly such was found to be the case. Electrified surfaces produced the same feelings as magnets, crystals, &c.

The same remark applies to *chemical action*, which, being a source of heat, electricity, and magnetism, is therefore in all probability a direct agent in causing odyllic effects. On the experiment being made, the fact became apparent beyond a doubt.

‘To determine this point,’ says the author, ‘I took a glass of water, dissolved in it bicarbonate of soda, introduced the end of a copper wire five feet long into it, gave the other end to Mademoiselle Maix, laid a pinch of powdered tartaric acid on the edge of the glass, and when her hand was accustomed to the wire, sprinkled the acid into the solution. As soon as the decomposition began, the same sensation of warmth, followed by coolness, was perceived as when I touched the end of the wire with my ten fingers, with the point of a large crystal, or with a bar magnet. It became so strong that it produced flushing of the face. It continued uniformly as long as the action lasted, and ceased when it stopped.’

Having satisfactorily determined the odyllic power of chemical action, the author introduces the case of *vital action*, and shows that odyle is developed in the processes of digestion and assimilation. By its connection in this manner with the blood, he explains the influence of the human hand upon sensitive patients, which, at a very early period of his researches, he had found to possess the same powers as the magnet and crystals. By making passes with his right hand, he could produce the very same effects as with the north pole of a magnet; likewise the luminosity apparent at the extremities of the magnet was observed streaming from the fingers of any person in the room. In some persons the odyllic force of the hand is much more powerful than in others, no doubt depending on the totality of the chemical and vital processes going on in the system, and to some extent measuring their energy. It was found that the odyllic force of an individual varied greatly from time to time, and went through a regular series of variations every twenty-four hours; being greatest two or three hours after noon, and least at the corresponding hour in the night. The author exhibits those variations in a curve, and endeavours to draw inferences from them as to the proper hours of eating, working, and sleeping.

We must, however, pass on to the remaining sources of odyle—namely, the sun, moon, and stars. The sun is found to give the odyllo-negative or cooling influence, while the moon gives the warm disagreeable influence. As lunatics are of all other persons the most susceptible to odyle, the baron has no difficulty in ascribing to its influence the action of the moon on this class. From the contrasted peculiarities of the sun and moon, coupled with some direct observations on the influence of the starry sky, he makes a generalisation to the effect, that bodies shining by their own light—such as the stars—are odyllo-negative, or cool and agreeable; while bodies shining by reflected light—as the planets—are odyllo-positive. But light in general, as has been seen, including artificial lights, has odyllic power.

For the present, we can only further advert to the transmissibility of odyle by wires, and the surfaces of many substances. A glass of water can be charged by a magnet, by the hand, or simply by standing in the

light. The influence, subtle as it is, is also found to be liable to the same laws of radiation as heat. These are curious facts, and seem to point to strange mysteries connected with the human constitution which remain to be found out.

#### RESIDENCE OF ADAM SMITH.

MANY who hear of the great economical work of Dr Adam Smith know little of its history, or of the character and circumstances of its author.

Very unlike the literary productions of modern days, it was the result of *ten years' labour*. It was not merely written during ten years of a man's life, the product of occasional application or of leisure hours. Smith, who was a quiet bachelor, living with an aged mother, and wholly a being of study, retired from the busy haunts of men to write this book, and was *completely occupied by it* for ten years. Such, we suspect, is the true way to make great books and consequently great and enduring reputations.

The retreat of Smith during these ten years was his mother's house, in the seaport town of Kirkaldy, on the north shore of the Firth of Forth, opposite to Edinburgh. He could here see the busy capital, where lived his friends Hume, Blair, Robertson, and others; but he seldom went thither. Having been born in Kirkaldy and brought up at its grammar school, he had some old friends of youthful days there, and with them he maintained a little intercourse. Beyond this he was almost a hermit. The space occupied by his remarkable labours was from the year 1766 to 1776, when the work was published, at which time the author was fifty-three years of age.

A stranger, passing through the long rambling town of Kirkaldy, will very probably observe, inscribed over an entry or alley, 'DR ADAM SMITH'S CLOSE.' He may here see the house, and even the room, where this great work was concocted. About twenty years ago, the following account of the residence of Smith was written by a gentleman of Kirkaldy in obedience to an inquiry which had been addressed to him:—

'The house in Kirkaldy which was inhabited by Dr Smith, his mother, and Miss Douglas, a cousin, is a house of three storeys, situated on the south side of the street (nearly opposite the shop of Mr Cumming, bookseller), now the property of the heirs of Michael Beveridge, haberdasher. About the centre of the front is a close or entry by which you pass in ascending to the second and third storeys. At the extremity of the close is a large court or open area in rear of the house. On the east or left side of this court is a building at right angles to the front building, locally denominates a *back jamb*. This back jamb contains the staircase by which you ascend to the second and third storeys, and also several apartments. Dr Smith occupied the third storey of the house, and his study was the southernmost room of the back jamb, a room I estimate (I visited it to-day) about fourteen feet by ten, having one window looking into the back court, and another in the gable or south wall of the back jamb looking towards the sea. The fireplace is in the gable. Between the fireplace and the side of the window is a space of about three feet: there stood the doctor's chair; and here he sat by the fire, the one knee over the other, reclining

his right shoulder against the wall, dictating his immortal work to his amanuensis, Rob Reid, who sat on the opposite side of the fireplace at a small table fronting the doctor. Dr Smith wore a tie-wig, and when sitting in the position I have described, in deep meditation, he frequently leaned his head against the wall, by which, in process of time, the paper of the wall became stained by the pomatum on his wig. This stain or mark remained on the wall for many years after Dr Smith left Kirkaldy, but is now no longer visible. The house became the property of Andrew Cowan, merchant in Kirkaldy, who carefully preserved the greasy mark upon the wall during his life. After his death the property passed into the possession of one who, though he knew sufficiently well the practice of amassing wealth, knew little of the principles developed in the "Wealth of Nations," and cared as little for this curious relic of its celebrated author. The room has been divested of its antique papering, and along with it the greasy mark of the philosopher's wig. The curious old mantelpiece has been replaced by one of more recent fashion, and the room itself is disjoined from the third storey by a partition; the entrance to it is now by a stair from the second storey.'

'I cannot say I ever saw this mark myself, but several gentlemen who knew Dr Smith, and who were well acquainted with the position of the mark, have pointed it out to me as I have now described it. I have some doubt that Mr Fleming has been deceived by his memory in stating that he has *seen* the mark. I have a distinct recollection of having visited the room a number of years ago along with the late James Sibbald, M.D., and some others, of whom perhaps Mr Fleming was one, when we attempted a subscription for a bust of Dr Smith, which, to the disgrace of Kirkaldy, could not be effected, and at that time I know the mark was obliterated.'

'I presume you are aware that Dr Smith's father was comptroller of customs in Kirkaldy. His mother was of the family of Douglas of Strathenry in Fife, and the doctor stood in the relation of grand-uncle to the present Robert Douglas, Esq. of Strathenry. He received the rudiments of his education at the grammar school of Kirkaldy, under the tuition of David Millar, a celebrated teacher of that period. A gentleman now in Kirkaldy, whose father was a class-fellow of Smith's at Kirkaldy school, states to me, on the authority of his father, that when at school he displayed no superiority of intellect to his contemporaries, but his mind always kept hold of whatever it acquired; that he never cordially joined in any of the pastimes or youthful frolics of his schoolfellows, but after school hours went his way quietly home. Whether this proceeded from a natural disinclination to schoolboy amusements, or whether his delicate constitution prevented him from taking part in the games of his more robust schoolfellows, my informant cannot say. It was during the time that he was professor of moral philosophy in Glasgow that he composed his Theory of Moral Sentiments. He left his chair in Glasgow to travel with the Duke of Buccleuch (grandfather of the present duke), who settled an annuity on the doctor. It was after his return from the continent with the duke, and before his appointment in the customs, that he composed his "Wealth of Nations." It is generally understood that he contemplated this work some years before this period, and had digested an outline of his subject; but when he came to prepare the work for the press, he found it would be more convenient to have an amanuensis to

\* The original letter from which these extracts are made has been found among the papers of a lady lately deceased. Being without an envelope, we know not to whom it was addressed. It may have been published before, but we deem this not likely.—Eo.

transcribe for him. For this purpose he engaged Robert Reid, a weaver in Linktown, to attend him in the evening, after he had finished his daily labour at the loom. In pursuance of this plan, Rob, who wrote a fair hand, attended the doctor in the evening, and wrote out the cogitations of the day. To give you some idea of the care and attention bestowed by the author upon his subject, I am informed by a gentleman here that Rob Reid has assured him that he (Reid) "is certain that he wrote the 'Wealth of Nations' fifty times over before it was printed." Making even a large allowance for exaggeration in this assertion, sufficient remains to prove that the author had been at very great pains to render the work complete; and the character of the work justifies the pains he had taken.'

Dugald Stewart, in his memoir of Smith, relates a curious anecdote of his infancy. 'An accident which happened to him when he was about three years old, is of too interesting a nature to be omitted in the account of so valuable a life. He had been carried by his mother to Strathenry, on a visit to his uncle, Mr Douglas, and was one day amusing himself alone at the door of the house, when he was stolen by a party of vagrants who are known in Scotland by the name of tinkers. Luckily he was soon missed by his uncle, who, hearing that some vagrants had passed, pursued them with what assistance he could find, till he overtook them in Leslie Wood, and was the happy instrument of preserving to the world a genius which was destined not only to extend the boundaries of science, but to enlighten and reform the commercial policy of Europe.'

It is not unworthy of remark, that Smith was one of the many instances which could be brought forward against the too gallant theory that men possessing extraordinary genius are chiefly indebted for it to their mothers. While the mother of Smith was an ordinary woman, the talents of his father had been evinced by his being raised from the duties of an ordinary writer to the signet to be private secretary to the Secretary of State for Scotland. The father, however, having died before the son was born, Smith was indebted to his mother for the care which brought him through a sickly infancy, and for much domestic happiness during the long period of sixty-one years that she was spared to him.

Adam Smith enjoyed the dignified situation of a Commissioner of the Customs in Scotland for the last fifteen years of his life, and during this time he lived in Edinburgh. The house he occupied still exists in the Canongate, but is much altered, besides being vulgarised by the neighbourhood of an iron-foundry. It used to be called Pammure House, having been originally the town mansion of the Earl of Pannure, who was forfeited for his concern in the rebellion of 1715.

It is interesting to know respecting Adam Smith, that he was an artless, unworldly man, of perfect purity of life, and extraordinary benevolence. As a consequence of his so exclusive devotion to study, he was remarkable for absence of mind, and for a habit of speaking to himself. It is a veritable anecdote told of him in Edinburgh, that a fishwoman was impressed by his uncouth manner and his loud mutterings as he passed along the street, with the idea that he was a lunatic, remarking pathetically to a companion, 'And he's weel put on too; that is, well-dressed—her sense of the calamity being greatly increased by its contrast with his obvious good circumstances. He lived very inexpensively—being, as he himself remarked, 'a beau only in his books.' It therefore gave surprise that at his death he did not leave much money. The explanation at length appeared, in various cases which came to light, making it certain that he had been in the practice of giving large sums in charity, though with such modesty that the fact was not suspected in his life-time.

So kind, gentle, self-devoting, and inoffensive was the philosopher to whom was vouchsafed the first clear insight into the principles which rule the great material interests of man in society.

### MOHALLET ABOU ALI; OR THE INHOSPITABLE VILLAGE.

THERE are two different modes of ascending the Nile, according as travellers are in a hurry, or leisurely disposed. In the first case, you must be in a perpetual conflict with the captain of your boat and the crew; you must coax or bully, promise or threaten; you must be up with the first streak of day, and see that there is a due supply of loaves on board, that one of the men has not gone ashore on the understanding that he is to be waited for on the next reach, and that none of the tackle wants mending; you must take care that a sufficient number of hands go to the tracking-rope; you must be deaf to the thousand reasons urged for stopping at every village, where some one is sure to have a friend or a relation; and you must storm and rave if the boat runs a-ground until it is got off again. At least this is the system adopted, whether from necessity or not. I have made such a trip once, and never wish to do so again, for the celerity gained is but comparative. Unless a good wind serves, your progress must, after all, be slow, and there is a great deal of bustle and annoyance without any corresponding advantage.

I always preferred the other way of going to work, especially in my excursions along the shores of the Delta. The object was not so much to leave so many villages and so many palm-woods in the rear, as to escape from absolute repose. A few hours' sail suffice to reveal all the variety of which the landscape is susceptible. There are no new prospects to expect, no new points of view to attain. The same kind of country spreads on all sides in its vast monotonous tranquillity. Plain and wood, wood and plain, succeed and resemble one another; the village you reach is the counterpart of the one you have quitted; and the same white tomb seems constantly gleaming from the same copse. Even the river, with its islands, its creeks, its tortuous branches, its lake-like expanses, its sombre eddies and shining shallows, appears to take a delight in repeating itself. The eye is perpetually recognising characteristics it had before observed. The long rows of birds that are seen each morning on the edge of some vast sandbank, make their appearance again in the evening, as if the current had refused to permit an ascension, and kept the boat all day in the same place. The sky has an aspect equally unchanging with the earth: the sun glares down from dawn to eve in unsullied brightness; it rises from the horizon unattended by clouds, and sinks, when its course is run, in a vapourless west.

Yet it must not be supposed that this want of striking variety introduces any sense of weariness into the mind. There is something in the climate of Egypt that disposes one not to seek for violent contrasts, but to allow with pleasure the approach of such ideas only as impress themselves by almost imperceptible degrees. I was always happy on the Nile, always content with myself and with the world. In the absence of the excitement created in other countries by the perpetual alternation of hill and valley, of rocky or wood-lined vistas opening and shutting in either hand, of ruin-crowned rocks or shadowy hollows, of torrents dancing in the sunshine, or lakelets sleeping beneath the umbrage of outstretched branches—I found pleasure in watching the little accidents that diversified, to an attentive eye, the scene that at first appeared so monotonous. Seated on the roof of the cabin, I endeavoured to become acquainted with the outline of every palm-grove, the peculiar beauties of every minaret, the dimensions of every tomb, the direction of every canal. I traced the progress of little caravans as they wound

along the embankments; I marked the varieties of the aspect, or the progress of the river in eating away its banks, or devouring little islands, or creating others. There was always something to see and notice: here a drove of buffaloes immersing their huge bulk in the water; there a number of camels and asses with their owners waiting for a ferry-boat; now a flight of pigeons; then a legion of aquatic birds. The variety in the craft afloat is great, from the vast unwieldy *dahabieh*, with its house-like cabin, and lofty prow, and sails more than a hundred feet in length, to the little canoe impelled by a square yard of canvas.

We had left Fouah early in the morning, and by taking advantage sometimes of a light breeze that came sighing across the waters, sometimes of the tracking-rope, had made about a dozen miles, when the *reis* (captain) with a complacent air announced that, satisfied with the day's work, he meant to stand over to a village that was in view on the western bank, and lie to for the night. As we had no particular object in hurrying on, we might have submitted quietly to this lazy plan, had he not, with true Arab loquacity, proceeded to give fifty reasons for a delay. At the third or fourth we stopped him, and announced our determination to proceed. He had unconsciously furnished us with an object, excited our imaginations, whetted our curiosity. Unfortunate man! he did not know that it is the weakness of the European in his travels to seek rather than to avoid danger: so he told us that if we passed on, the breeze that was beginning to crisp the surface of the river would bear us about night to Mohallet Abou Ali, a village celebrated for inhospitality, where strangers were always insulted, ill-treated, sometimes robbed and murdered.

'This is delightful!' said my companion. 'I am not quite so Oriental as you, and confess that this indolent *kef* was beginning to be wearisome. A village of robbers will be an agreeable episode.'

'I agree with you,' replied I, 'for you exaggerate my Orientalism. It is true I feel an ineffable sense of well-being in this dreamy kind of life—that the rocking of the boat and the splashing of the waters, and the lazy contemplation of this beautiful country as it steals by, produce sensations sufficiently keen to occupy my mind; but I am not yet insensible to the spur of novelty, and our *reis* has succeeded in rousing me. Ho! then, for Mohallet Abou Ali!'

And the boat, which had already begun to incline towards the village on the opposite bank, resumed its former direction; the breeze filled our vast sail; we turned a long, low point; the breeze increased; the waves began to rise; the breeze became a gale; and on we went, until, a little after sunset, we reached a long, low shore, where two or three boats made fast announced the neighbourhood of a village.

The short twilight of the East was already nearly over. All was dim and uncertain; the river passed like a vast phantom, the skirts just rustling against the shadowy banks; at some distance inland we could distinguish a pile of buildings, dark and sombre, which we judged to be the village, rising at the extremity of the vast flat, alongside which we were moored. The boats near us were deserted; save one, in the cabin of which we could discern a figure going through the evolutions of prayer. All was silent. Our crew seemed oppressed with fear, and spoke in an undertone. None of them seemed inclined to land; but they all sat before the mast in a circle, deplored no doubt the rashness which had brought them into so dangerous a position. Suddenly we heard in the distance noise, as if some huge marine monster was beating the river with its paws. It came nearer and nearer, and presently rounding a point, a huge flaming eye came in sight! It was a steamer from Cairo; and she soon vanished in the gloom.

The tea passed in silence, but the prospect of a visit to the inhospitable village still retained its seduction; and duly armed with our pipes, we were soon traversing

the flat, followed by the trembling Ahmed. After a couple of hundred yards, we found our feet sinking in the mud, and by stooping down, discerned a broad expanse of water before us. We beat a retreat, and again and again tried our luck, but each time were stopped by the same obstacle. We said it was disagreeable, but Ahmed declared that it was fortunate: that it was better to return and sleep in the boat, and that we could explore the village in the morning. Necessity was about to force us to adopt this plan, when we discerned half-a-dozen men approaching us armed with spears or staves, we could not tell which. They asked us gruffly what we were doing there; but on our saying that we wished to go to the coffee-house, offered to point out the road.

'Do not go,' whispered Ahmed; 'you see they have come out armed to attack us.'

We had no faith, however, in robbers, and followed our guides, who took us to a kind of ford, and introduced us safely into the sombre streets of the village. This done, they returned towards the river, leaving us in some uncertainty whether or not they were actuated by evil intentions. Ahmed strongly advised us to return and defend our property; but we urged that there would probably be as much difficulty as before in finding the ford. So we continued to grope along through the darkness, much astonished at perceiving no lights, and not the trace of human being. At length, however, we heard a murmur of voices down a narrow lane; and led by this, reached a low door, through the interstices of which a dim light gleamed. We knocked, and were admitted into a spacious coffee-house crammed with people, who, as they expressed no surprise at seeing us, probably expected our arrival. It was at once evident that there was something peculiar in the character of the inhabitants of Mohallet Abou Ali. Nobody returned our greetings with cordiality; some affected not to hear them; a few responded merely by an uncivil stare. It was with difficulty we procured a seat; and when we did so, it was very far from the seat of honour, usually conceded in all Egyptian villages to a stranger, of no matter what creed.

This reception was far from being of good augury, but we had come with a determination to be agreeable to ourselves and others. We offered pipes and tobacco, which, though reluctantly accepted by some, constrained evidently the good-will of others. This supplied us with an idea, and we diplomatically resolved at all events to create a party in our favour. By degrees the host, who had received us with contemptuous indifference, began to relax as he counted the cups of coffee we ordered; and Ahmed, who had at first sat on the ground moody and uneasy, bestowed approving glances upon us, and collecting his Italian, said, 'Buono, buono, signori!' The evil-disposed, meanwhile, who had evidently endeavoured to prepare us a disagreeable reception, finding that they were reduced to a minority, sat in gloomy groups on one side, principally collecting round an Arnsout soldier, who twisted his moustache most ferociously.

Presently a young man began to sing the song 'Doos, y a leilee!' once so popular in Egypt, but now replaced in the great towns by more modern productions. Upon this Ahmed, who piqued himself on being a connoisseur, could not restrain a show of contempt; and continuing his reflection in Italian, said, 'Ma è buono per questi porchi!' ('But it is good enough for these hogs!')

'Hogs! Who are hogs?' inquired the Arnsout, who understood the single word, looking inexpressibly vicious at Ahmed.

Ahmed offered an explanation, and the song proceeded. It was terribly long; the singer did not spare us a single quaver or a single repetition; and his hearers applauded enthusiastically at every line. The scene was a curious one to behold. A large room, with doors and windows closed, was but half-lighted by a small oil-lamp that swung by a cord from the ceiling. In one corner was a little square place, partly divided

off, that served as kitchen and office, where all the utensils connected with the establishment are kept—as pipes, shishaks, coffee-pots, zerfs, frizans, &c. including a large jar of water. The glare of a charcoal fire illuminated the face of a one-eyed, half-naked waiter, who superintended the cooking operations; whilst the master hustled about, serving and receiving payment. The company was disposed around on divans, or in the centre of the apartment on little seats of palm-wood. It was easy to distinguish the notabilities of the place. The Sheik-el-Beled, who should have performed the duties of hospitality towards us, sat apart in voluntary obscurity. He was hesitating between the prejudices of his people and fear of the displeasure of a Frank. Near him were two or three Fellahs of the better class, in turbans and clean blue shirts, probably small proprietors; there were also a few shopkeepers—the dealer in tobacco, who discoursed learnedly on troubak; the clothier, who made a voyage to Cairo or Alexandria four times a year to renew his stock; the barber, who was easy to be recognised by his loquacity; and the indigo dyer, who was still blue from top to toe. The remainder were for the most part ordinary labourers, with the exception of the Arnaout, and a few captains of boats or common sailors. This collection of *tarbooshes* (turbans), *libdehs* (felt caps), and *tukiahs* (white skull-caps)—of faces bearded or unbearded, sallow or brown, scowling or jovial—of jackets, shawls, blue shirts, or blue trousers, and naked legs—of pipes of all dimensions—of wreaths or clouds of smoke—would have formed, beneath the dim gleam of the centre light, an admirable subject for a painter, especially as the singer, who had taken up his position near the door, formed a point of attraction for all eyes.

I really forget how the harmony of the scene was disturbed. It could not have been the tea; it could not have been the excitement of the adventure with the steamer: it may have been indignation at the scowling glances now and then directed by some bigoted group towards us; it may have been fatigue at the length of the song; it may have been something else—mere exuberance of health, for example—but I think I remember, whilst the inhospitable were venting their admiration somewhat impiously at a passage more licentious than usual by a sonorous 'Ullah!' that a joke was uttered by one of us that tickled our fancies so extremely, that a peal of inextinguishable laughter, rising by degrees into a perfect crowd of delight, burst forth. All was immediately confusion. Black beards shook, white teeth gleamed, round eyes flashed, everybody rose, and it will easily be imagined that we rose also. The time for retreat was come, but we found the door by which we had entered blocked up by a crowd of the most infuriated. We paid what we owed; and amidst a perfect Babel of voices, made our exit in another direction, leaving the anger of the Arabs to evaporate, as it usually does, in exclamations and oaths. We found ourselves in a kind of bazaar, perfectly deserted, and had some difficulty in making our way out. Succeeding at length, we returned towards the boat, but soon perceived that we were pursued by a number of men armed with long sticks. Their courage had got up as soon as we disappeared, and the most fanatic had no doubt made dreadful vows of punishment against the irreverential infidels. 'We shall all be killed!' said Ahmed. 'Let us run to the boat, and get the guns!' We judged it better to wait for the pursuers, who, perceiving that we turned back tranquilly towards them, came to a halt. One or two approached, and I asked them if they had any fowls to sell. The question was received as a good joke, and raised a laugh, under cover of which we crossed the ford, and walked across the flat in the direction of the tall masts which we could dimly see in a line along the shore. The valiant 'Mohallet-Abou-Alians,' as we described them, remained talking furiously together for some time; but they did not approach, and at length returned no doubt to their coffee-house to anathematise us.

The instructive part of this adventure did not escape me. I reflected that it was both imprudent and improper to shock the prejudices and show any contempt for the customs of the people in whose country one travels; and profiting by my experience, I never afterwards, in any village, whether reputed inhospitable or not, met with the same reception as at Mohallet Abou Ali.

#### LONDON NEWSPAPERS AND LONDON THEATRES.

THE relation in which the journals and theatres of London stand towards each other involves many curious particulars, which are liable to be very imperfectly understood by all but the initiated. We propose endeavouring to give an impartial and dispassionate view of it.

It is not an imperative law, but it is something like an imperative custom, for every theatre in the metropolis to give a free admission for two to every metropolitan journal. It sometimes happens that a newspaper, choosing to indulge in a series of bitter diatribes against a particular theatre, has its orders stopped; but instances are rare, and such feuds are in general soon patched up. The rule adopted by the manager of the two most flourishing theatres in London is to accord a double free admission to any literary or political journal of a year's standing. Some such restriction as this is absolutely necessary to prevent a theatre from being deluged by the nominees of the scores of trumpery, catchpenny journals which spring daily up in mushroom swarms only to wither and die after a few weeks of struggling existence. We believe, indeed, that previous to the rule of a year's existence being more or less acted upon, not a few quasi-theatrical journals were started for the express purpose of getting orders—the produce of the sale of these admissions forming the chief revenue of the paper; at the present time, however, the vast majority of newspapers writing orders are established and respectable prints.

At first sight, the number of persons thus nightly admitted free may appear to be a very serious pull upon the treasury of the theatre. A little inquiry into the practical working of the system, however, will prove that—allowing for exceptional instances—the grievance is more theoretical than practical. As the vast majority of the 'order' audience is composed of persons who would not go to the theatre unless they had orders, it follows that they do positive pecuniary harm to the management only when they take up room which others would be willing to pay for. But the cases are exceedingly rare in which this, to any great extent at least, takes place. No manager counts, upon the average of nights, on completely filling his house with a paying audience; on the contrary, we believe that most managers would be very happy could they compound for two-thirds of the boxes being fairly and legitimately occupied upon an average of nights: it follows that the remaining third of the space may not only without loss, but with positive advantage to the theatre, so far as keeping up appearances goes, be occupied by persons who enter free of charge. The proof that such is the case is to be found in the fact, that not only is there in most theatres a tolerably long free-list—that is to say, a list of ladies and gentlemen having on different grounds complimentary admissions totally distinct from the press orders—but that there is frequently a pretty copious issue of manager's orders, generally distributed a short time before the performances begin, and only available if presented before seven o'clock, so as to compel their bearers to aid in what is always an essential matter in keeping up theatrical appearances—the formation of an apparently good house at the raising of the curtain. The *habitué* of the London theatres will tell at a glance the probable proportion of paying and non-paying audience—when a 'house is money'—when it is made up of 'paper'—or when, in still more pro-

found theatrical slang, the audience belong to the 'Stationers' Company.' There is always a certain daintiness of style about the order-class of playgoers. Their favourite haunt is the undress tier of boxes. The ladies prefer keeping on their bonnets, and the gentlemen seldom worry themselves about the niceties of dress kids or laced shirt fronts. Upon the occasion of a genuine theatrical success, when the house is really crowded, the issue of manager's orders is of course stopped—the free-list is suspended—generally, however, with a pretty large proportion of exceptions; and then, and then only, the newspaper free-list becomes a positive disadvantage to the manager. These are epochs, however, in theatrical history which unhappily form exceptions to the general rule: in nineteen cases out of twenty not a single person willing to pay is excluded by a person having entered free.

So much for the working of the system as regards the profits of managers; its abuses in other respects are flagrant and notorious. The ordinary free-list of a theatre is principally made up of persons connected with literature, art, the literary departments of the press and the drama; in fact, it originated very much upon the principle that cobries don't pluck out cobries' o'en. The extension of free-list privileges in a transferable form to newspapers was no doubt a recognition of the general claim of those employed upon them to come under, to a greater or a less degree, one or other of the different categories which we have enumerated, and it was also of course intended to insure constant free admission for the purposes of criticism and report. In any one of these respects the order system is habitually and unblushingly abused.

In the first place, a large proportion, often the majority, of the *employees* of a newspaper have no claim to be considered as literary men, or men connected with the arts. The majority of reporters, who are little more than mere short-hand writers—the entire force connected with the city and the business departments of a newspaper—and the connections and acquaintances of the proprietor—none of these individuals properly come under the classes for which the free-list was originally designed; but all of them claim, to a greater or less extent, participation in the press free-list privilege. Did the evil end here, however, it would be comparatively trifling. What the London managers have a good right to complain of, and what every individual connected with the more intellectual departments of a newspaper ought to be earnest in protesting against, is the system pursued by almost every journal, large or small, in London—of regularly using the orders as bribes for advertisements; of making them over to tradesmen, clerks, and agents in return for advertisements; of using them, in fact, for the private purposes and private profit of the newspaper itself, and without the slightest reference to the literary and artistic purposes for which the privilege was originally and not ungracefully granted. So perfectly is this species of traffic understood, that a tolerably regular advertiser expects the allowance of a sort of per-centge in orders, just as habitually as the newspapers expect the accordancce by the managers of the privilege of issuing them. Indeed newspapers are wary of disappointing customers who weekly pay a very considerable amount of money over their counters; so much so, indeed, that instances are not uncommon of journals paying for Opera boxes when they do not happen to have any at their command, and an important advertiser announces to the clerk that he should very much like to hear Grisi or Sontag next Thursday. Thus of the whole number of orders issued in a week, it is more than probable that the vast majority go to the clerks and agents of great companies, or to substantial and flourishing traders, who are certainly rich enough, if they want to be amused at the theatre, to pay their money at the door. This order traffic, this bartering of orders for advertisements, forms, in the cases of the less prosperous weekly journals, no unimportant item in their catalogue

of ways and means; while even, as regards the daily leviathans of the press, the practice is one which most of them would, for pounds, shillings, and pence reasons, fight shy of putting an end to. Yet a more flagrant perversion of a gracefully-accorded privilege can hardly be imagined.

For critical and literary purposes, the order system is in its operation all but useless. The gentlemen to whom are intrusted the theatrical departments of the various journals are in a majority of instances individuals holding a recognised literary position, always more or less connected with the drama, and thus able to command personal admission, without any necessity for using the orders issued by their respective journals. This rule is not universal over all the press, but it holds strictly true as regards every one of the journals the theatrical criticism of which is of the least weight or reputation. To the established critic, himself frequently a dramatist, the doors of the theatre are flung unhesitatingly open, on the score of his own personal reputation and merits. The regular order of the paper may be used or not; ordinarily the critic gives himself no trouble about the matter. He walks down to the theatre, and enters it as freely as his own house. Thus, we repeat, for literary or critical purposes the order system is a perfect nullity. The theatrical paragraphs occasionally written by the more ordinary class of reporters who gain admission by means of the privilege of the journal, we of course do not place in the category of literary or critical writing; but it is only upon such occasions as those of Boxing-Day or Easter Monday, when every theatre brings out a simultaneous novelty, that the amateur critics in question are brought into play.

The general fairness and honesty of the theatrical critics of the London journals, is a point often not very understandingly discussed by those partially acquainted with or interested in the subject. The question is a delicate one; but we do not hesitate to say that dramatic criticism is upon the whole fully as trustworthy, and conceived in at least as fair a spirit, as that which presides over the 'ungentle craft,' as applied to general literature. In both cases, however, the disturbing bias is founded nine times out of ten upon personal acquaintance with the author, or personal connection with the branch of literature criticised. In dramatic criticism, more perhaps than in general reviewing, the tendency now-a-days is to be too favourable—too mealy-mouthed as to faults, and too apt to soothe mediocrity with mild phrases of faint praise. In this respect, however, professed critics follow to some extent the example shown by the public: all old playgoers know what a different thing an audience of to-day is compared with an audience of a score or thirty years ago. There are no regular theatrical condemnations in our polite age. A play is now seldom or never absolutely and irredeemably damned upon its first representation; modern audiences are either too good-natured or too lazy to give themselves the trouble of pronouncing a decided verdict. Once upon a time it was a volley of acclamations or an indignant outburst of yells and hooting: these days are gone by; and now when a play fails to please, the public signifies its opinion not by any overt act in the theatre, but by the quite as significant process of staying at home. The piece is found not to 'draw,' and so after a few convulsive sprays, it collapses, and gently sinks under the burthen of its own unassisted weight. To some degree, then, we repeat, modern theatrical criticism has taken its tone from modern theatrical usages: it is seldom or never fiercely abusive; in the worst of cases it is always ready to let the unfortunate 'down easily'; it has a quick eye for beauties, and a dim one for faults, and seldom fails in the very worst performance to find some redeeming trait.

This tone and tendency, however, has other sources than that which we have indicated. Actors, dramatic authors, and dramatic critics are very generally mutual

acquaintances. To criticise a book, a man may read it at home, or where he pleases, and the chances are that he never comes personally across the author; to criticise a play, a man must go to the theatre: there he finds certain *habitués* whose faces get familiar to him as his does to them; gradually an extensively-spreading acquaintance springs up; year by year the critic finds himself becoming on more and more intimate terms with the whole theatrical brotherhood, mingling in all the theatrical politics, and deeply versed in all the secret theatrical movements and intrigues of the day. The result of this species of companionship is a general tendency on the part of the critic to stand by his order—to associate the personal merits of his friends with those of their plays—to 'do a good fellow a good turn'—and, in fact, as a general rule, to make things look as well as possible. This principle applies of course equally to the actors and the dramatic authors criticised. It may perhaps be imagined that the converse effect would in such circumstances be occasionally the result—that personal enmities and quarrels would produce their effects as well as personal intimacies. We reply, that through a somewhat extended experience, we have never known an instance of private pique producing an unduly disparaging criticism, although we have very frequently recognised private friendship as being at the bottom of remarkably *couleur de rose* estimates of dramatic merit. In saying this, we by no means insinuate the habitual appearance of anything like actually untrue or distorted criticism; but most people will appreciate the result of an examination into a subject which must be more or less a matter of taste—undertaken in a favourable and wellwishing mood to the original author.

There is, however, another, and perhaps a still more injurious influence at work, in the cases of many admirably qualified dramatic critics: they are themselves dramatists; and the not unnatural result is, not only a desire to keep well with the managers, but very frequently a sense of ungrateful discourtesy involved in the notion of attacking the interests of a house from which they themselves have derived advantage. 'Confound it!' we have heard a gentleman say, sorely perplexed between his desire candidly to state his opinion and his wish not to be too hard on his friends—'confound it! here's So-and-So bringing out an absurd piece of rubbish; but what can I do?—A man can't go in and abuse a management when he has got a couple of his own pieces accepted by it, and in the house.' It will be generally admitted that there is something unpleasant in the dilemma. 'But,' replies a reader, 'are not all these criticisms anonymous?'—Are they not taken as the opinion of a journal, not of an individual?' Herein lies one of the absurd mystifications and incongruities of the nominally anonymous character of the press. No, reader; neither criticism nor article, with some few rare exceptions, is anonymous to those behind the scenes in London journalism. To the general public the voice which speaks is of course utterly unknown: it hears the sound, but sees no utterer, and the *ignotum* may or may not be taken by it for the *magnifico*. But to the initiated the case is different: by such a newspaper is taken up with the exclamation, 'Well, let's see what Jones or Smith—not what the journals in which these gentlemen write—says of Robinson's farce or Johnson's burlesque.' Thus to the very people with respect to whom the veil of the anonymous is held in theory to be a precaution intended to secure the uninfluenced judgment of the writer, that veil is a perfectly transparent screen, through which all behind it is visible; while to the general public, with respect to whom no such precautions can be considered necessary, the same veil is of impenetrable density: in other words, the anonymous does hide a man with respect to those from whom he does not wish to be concealed, while it has not the slightest effect in concealing him from those by whom he really may not want to be seen. It is like a disguise which would conceal a spy from his

own army, but reveal his character at once to the enemy's forces. The member of the general public who does not care one button about the critic's motives, sees only the opinion of the newspaper—that of the abstract 'we'; while the personally interested reader—the dramatist or the actor reviewed—sees in the journal nothing but the accidental frame in which is set the private opinion of Mr This-That or T'other—a gentleman whom he is more or less in the habit of meeting, and of whose connection with the stage, and probable peculiar interest in certain of its branches, he is perfectly aware.

To obtain perfectly unbiased theatrical criticism is thus extremely difficult, unless, indeed, the critic holds himself rigidly and absolutely aloof from all theatrical acquaintance, and resolutely determines to become a hermit in the social and literary circle in which he must performe move. That men may be found who will fulfil these conditions is of course possible; but it is no less true that they are by no means common, and that if they were, newspaper proprietors would care very little about looking after them; for to a certain extent the domain of the newspaper critic stretches beyond what absolutely passes upon the stage. On the occurrence of any theatrical event, any crisis in theatrical politics, or any odd incident connected with the personnel of the stage, a journal expects that its accredited 'theatrical man' will be able to give a good account of it—a task of course which would be utterly inconsistent with the observance of the rigid state of theatric isolation which we have indicated. In short, what a newspaper for its peculiar purposes requires, is less a studious dramatic *savant*, applying himself only to the pure realisation of the art upon the stage, than a thorough-going man of the dramatic world—perfectly *au fait* to the diplomacy of London theatres—perfectly *au courant* to the latest morsels of dramatic gossip—an authority upon the chronology, for a score years, of the London stage, and what is almost as important, a pundit so deeply versed in the lore of French vaudeville and melodrame, as to be able to pounce in an instant upon a translation, and at once inform the world that 'The Jackdaw in Peacock's Feathers,' played last night for the first time at the so-and-so theatre, is neither more nor less than an adaptation of a 'Folie' from the Palais-Royal, or a 'Comédie-vaudeville' from the Gymnase. It is in truth the same in real as in theatrical politics: the most valuable leader-writer for everyday requirement is not the deep and studious political sage who, far retired from the clash of party and the buzz of *salon* and lobby, indites miracles of profound constitutional wisdom, but the dashing, sparkling essayist who, with one hand upon the paper, and the other on the pulse of the public—a perfect appreciation of what the City wants, or what Mayfair relishes, or what Pall-Mall approves of—flings off sheet after sheet, with the tattle of the House and the echoes of the clubs still ringing in his ears.

Warped, then, by these influences taking an unavoidable impress from these requirements, the theatrical criticism of the London press is still far more fair and far more honest than that which fills the weekly dramatic *feuilleton* of the Parisian journals. It is in colouring, and the point of view from which the subject is regarded, that the London critics are apt more or less to convey false impressions; but of wilful misstatement, actual perversion of fact, and still more, malicious misrepresentation, there are none. Making, then, in certain cases, a due allowance for *tone*, the cardinal characteristics of a dramatic work are sure to be faithfully and cleverly set forth. The attentive reader will often be struck with the knack displayed of conveying the main features of a complicated plot in a few rapidly-generalised sentences. He will admire the *aplomb* with which the critic jumps at once into the very marrow of the subject, and grasps in a twinkling its strong and its less effective points; while his admiration will not perhaps be lessened by a knowledge of the fact, that very

often these criticisms—so neat, so pungent, so full of tact and taste—have been dashed off, as fast as pen can go over paper, often amid the buzz of a crowded supper-room, and despatched to the printing-office, perhaps an hour, perhaps half an hour after the fall of the curtain.

A. B. R.

### ORIGIN OF THE CHOUAN INSURRECTION. FROM THE FRENCH.

THE proclamation of the republic during the progress of the first French Revolution, as is pretty well known, led to the civil war in the western provinces of France, when the untutored peasantry of Maine and La Vendée with marvellous though mistaken heroism took up arms for the royalist cause; keeping the republic, as was said, in a state of fever, and exciting a contest compared with which, to use the words of the brave General Hoche, upon whom devolved the task of suppressing it, all others were but play. The long-continued action of oppressive laws had done much towards screwing people's minds up to the resisting point; and of all causes of irritation none was more grievous than the *gabelle* or salt-tax. In Maine the price of salt was thirteen sous the pound; and while the gentry obtained an annual supply of the indispensable commodity free of duty, the poorer portion of the population were compelled to buy it from the government stores, where they were cheated both in quality and measure. Even if disposed to forego the use of salt altogether, they were interdicted availing themselves of this resource: the law fixed a minimum quantity which each inhabitant was forced to pay for. Recusancy was punished by fines, and smuggling by bullets; yet a large contraband trade in salt was actively carried on by a class of men called *faux-saulniers*. Nearly every peasant on the frontier of the province pursued the dangerous occupation: with a double sack on his shoulders, and armed with his long pole, which enabled him to leap hedges and ditches, he eluded the vigilance of the *gabelours*, or fought them if necessary: braving all dangers with a courage worthy of a better cause.

I had taken up my abode for a time in this part of the country, with a view to observe the present condition of its inhabitants, who retain many points of their ancient character. Among others, I had become acquainted with an honest miller, whose mill stood on a tributary of the Mayenne, and had heard him speak of one of his compatriots, the last representative of the adventurous guerillas of former times. I longed to see the old hero, who lived in a neighbouring village, and gather from him any particulars respecting his once-dreaded companions. The miller consented to drive me over in his car; 'But,' said he, as we rode along, 'it will be difficult to get him to speak, for he is always afraid of a reckoning. He is nothing more now than an old innocent, passing his days in knitting garters and hearing children say their catechism. But he has stopped diligences in his day, shot patriots, and decorated dogs'-tails with the tricoloured cockade. If you really wish him to relate his history, provide yourself with a bottle of cognac. You know that we must carry milk when we want to entice snakes from their holes.'

However this might be, it was evident that the miller on his part knew something of the matter in question. Shortly afterwards we came to a tree with a small cross nailed to the bark, before which a young girl was kneeling in apparent devotion.

'Ah, you are looking at the tall elm,' observed the miller as he checked the horse: 'in the time of the war that hollow trunk was the best hiding-place of the Chouans. A few years ago the skeleton of one of them was found inside there, with his musket and beads; the priests came and buried him, and nailed that fourpenny cross to the tree, and since then the people hereabouts take off their hats to it, or do still better, like that *tête blanche* there at her devotions. But, *pardi*, 'tis Jeannette; a descendant of the Brothers Chouan!'

'What!' I replied; 'is she one of the Cottereau family?'

'Just so. You would like to see her; eh? Hark ye, Jeannette, you have had enough of paternosters for once: it is not polite to show only your heels to the passers-by.'

The young girl made no movement. I expressed a doubt as to her having heard.

'Bah!' rejoined the miller, 'she has a quicker ear than a mole; but she wont disturb herself without a reason. I say, Jeannette, I have told the gentleman that you are the prettiest maiden in the parish; let him see that I have spoken truth.' Still no answer. 'Don't keep me waiting,' continued my companion; 'I have ten crowns' balance of account to pay over to you.'

The white headdress moved almost imperceptibly, but was not turned towards us. The miller laughed aloud—'I give up,' he said, again putting the horse in motion, 'since the ten crowns wont move her. You see that the young rogue can be deaf, and dumb too, when she likes. She is a true daughter-in-law of the Widow Poiriers.'

'And who was she?' I asked.

'The mother of the Brothers Chouan,' answered the miller: 'her freehold was called Les Poiriers; and among us each one takes the name of the land he cultivates. I can tell you her history, if you have never heard it.'

I immediately assumed an attitude of attention.

'You must know, first of all,' continued my companion, 'that the Cottereau family were sabot-makers from father to son, and lived in the middle of the woods in cabins built of leaves and chips. There their children were born, and brought up like wolves, with no other nurse than their own good pleasure. When of the proper age, they took their poles, and became faux-saulniers, after the example of their fathers. It appears that such a mode of life made them in time so gloomy and savage, that the people of the country gave them the name of Chouins,\* which since then has stuck to the family. The father of the three Cottereaus was, however, more sociable. By his sole aid he had obtained some education, and came every Sunday to Les Poiriers to read the lives of the saints to the men, and teach the holy service to the young girls. It was in this way that he made the acquaintance of Jeanne Moyné, and that they fell in love with each other: but the farmer could not give his daughter without disgrace to a man who had never cultivated the earth: so the lover was dismissed, and Jeanne received orders to bestow her heart elsewhere. She made no reply to the command: she neither prayed nor wept; only a few days afterwards she fled from the farm, and to let it be understood that she should not return, left her distaff and porringer broken at the door of the stable! Cottereau, who was waiting for her upon the road to Laval, conducted her to his cabin in the forest of Coucise. But Jeanne gave him to understand that she would not reside with him until they had been married by a priest. On the Sunday, therefore, they started for Saint-Ouen-des-Toits. The young girl went alone into the church to speak to the rector, but, as it happened, he had just mounted the pulpit to deliver the monitory. After having reprimanded those of his parishioners by name who had neglected the offices of the church, or worked on holy days without a dispensation, he announced that a girl of the neighbourhood had just caused much scandal by quitting her home to follow her lover; and he called upon her, according to custom, to confess her fault before the assembled parishes, under pain of excommunication. Thereupon Jeanne, who was kneeling in front of the pulpit among the other têtes blanches, and who had kept her head bent down to avoid recognition, suddenly stood up with a tranquil countenance, and began to recite her *confiteor* with audible voice. As you may suppose, this was a great

\* The patois of the district for *chats-huans*, screech-owls: and *chouin*, by corruption, became *chouan*.

astonishment for those who were present: the rector himself hardly knew whether to approve or to blame. He questioned the maiden concerning her flight; but, as I have heard my uncle say, who was one of the company, she gave such good reasons that all the women began to shed tears, and even the fathers of families could find nothing to say against them. As for the priest, he finished by recommending her to the prayers of the congregation; and the next evening he made her return, and married her privately to Cottereau, and afterwards gave them a certificate, to prevent their being disturbed in other parishes.

Here I interrupted the narrative, to inquire whether Jeanne had not reason soon to repeat her marriage with the sabot-maker.

'Not that I know of,' replied the miller. 'Cottereau was a severe man, but without *badness*, as they say here. He, however, died early; and then the widow came to live at Les Poiriers, which had been left to her, with her two daughters and four sons, among whom was the famous Jean Chouan.

'Before declaring war against the Blues,' pursued my companion, whom I was glad to find in a talking vein, 'Jean had become the most celebrated faux-saulnier of the province of Maine. He was always full of schemes to cheat the gabelours, and led the *contrebandiers* into many a scrape with his usual phrase, "there's no danger!" But in spite of his cleverness, he did not always escape without penalty or prison, only he revenged himself by new tricks. One day the officers from Laval, who had often imposed fines upon him which he would not pay, came over to seize the effects on the farm; but the Cottereaus, warned in time, carried away their property to neighbours' houses, and the officers found nothing but the four walls. However, they were not at a loss: the house had just been newly roofed, and they called in workmen to take off the slates and rafters, in order to sell them to the highest bidder. Jean would not quarrel with those who kept within their duty; instead of complaining, he himself aided in the work of unroofing, and in the evening invited the officers to see whether it had been done to their liking. His majesty's servants, who glorified themselves on a triumph, came without mistrust; but scarcely had they entered than Jean double-locked the door upon them, declaring, that since they prepared roofless houses for others, it was but fair they should make a trial of them; and as rain began to fall, he wished them good-night, and rejoined his companions in the village.

'That trick, I have heard my uncle say, cost him more than two hundred crowns; and before long he and his two brothers, the faux-saulniers, were tracked like foxes. The Poiriers family was ruined by judgments and seizures: they were in debt to everybody—farmer, miller, and baker: Jean grew yellow with spite and vexation at not being able to run a bag of salt without being taken. At length he started with a party of awkward fellows, all determined to open their way with their poles. They met the gabelours; there was a fight, and Jean killed the boldest of the opponents, Little Pierre, surnamed the *Fin Gabelou*. All the faux-saulniers present at the murder were in consternation, and clamoured for Jean to betake himself to Brittany, where he might hide for a time. "There's no danger!" he answered; and the same night he was in jail at Laval! His condemnation was certain, for offences against the salt-laws were judged by the very administrators of those laws, who were sure to pronounce in their own favour. The news of the event was brought to Jean's mother as she sat milking the last goat which confiscations had left at Les Poiriers. She sprang up in terror, exclaiming, "Heavens! the vagabond will be hanged." But taking courage again directly, she put on her best pair of shoes, as the old ballad says, and hastened to the château of the Princes of Talmont, who had always protected her family. As ill-luck would have it, they had just set out for the court. The widow sat for an hour on the staircase of

the mansion like one condemned waiting for the final stroke. At last she started up, saying, "There's only the king can pardon Jean;" and, as the song again mentions, carrying her shoes in her hand, she set out for Versailles.'

'And did she arrive there?' I exclaimed involuntarily.

'On the fifth day,' rejoined the miller, 'she had travelled seventy leagues upon the *hide of her feet*, without stopping except to beg for a morsel of bread when she was hungry, and a bed of straw in the barn when sleepy. But on reaching Versailles she learned that the Talmonts, through whom alone she could be admitted to the king, had delayed at some château on the route, no one knew where, and perhaps would be a long time before they came. This time poor Jeanne lost all heart. She passed a whole night on her knees before a crucifix without ceasing to weep; she knew no one at Versailles except the Prince of Talmont's coachman, a rustic from Saint-Ouen-des-Trois, who was quite overcome by the sight of so many tears, and asked her whether she had the courage to speak to the king all alone. "To save Jean," she answered, "I would speak to the pope!" "Well, then," replied Jerome, "I'll risk my place and all to serve a compatriot. You shall get into the prince's coach; the guards will think it is he going to pay his duty, and will let us pass the gates without a word; and when the king comes out of the grand vestibule to step into his coach, you must go and throw yourself at his feet; and pray Heaven to put words into your mouth, for it is the fate of all of us that will be decided!" The project was executed that very day: Jeanne took her seat in the coach, waited for the king, and as soon as he appeared ran towards him, crying, "Pardon, monseigneur; the Gabelous have ruined us, and now they want to hang my son because he made himself a faux-saulnier. Save Jean, monseigneur: there will be seven of us to pray to God for you!"

'At first the king was bewildered to hear himself called monseigneur by a woman with a wild look and in unknown costume. The people of the court exclaimed that she was mad, and ought to be arrested; but when she had related everything, it was who should admire the most. The king retired to sign a reprieve with his own hand, while waiting the pardon, which was sent off a few days afterwards.'

'And it was this same faux-saulnier,' I said, 'saved from the gibbet by the king, who tried in after-times to avenge him by commencing the royalist insurrection in the west?'

'The same. Jean Chouan was the first in France to take up his musket against the republic at the cry of *Vive le Roi*. But here we are at the end of our journey.'

We had in fact just turned into an avenue of plumb-trees, leading to the farm of Boutières, and were just in time to assist at the annual harvest festival. I felt double pleasure in a ride during which I had learned so much respecting the origin of what will long be remembered as *La Chouannerie*.

#### OCCASIONAL NOTES.

##### LOW-PRICED PIANOFORTES.

We are very glad to learn that the spirited conduct of Messrs Collard and Collard in lowering the price of a certain class of pianofortes has been attended with distinguished success, in as far as a very considerable sale has been obtained for these instruments. The merit of the firm deserves to be the more handsomely acknowledged—to use a phrase of Johnson's—since it is one of a very small number of British pianoforte makers who may be said to constitute the first class. It is so seldom that a first-class house is disposed to take a lead in innovations for the benefit of the public, and its doing so is so sure to expose it to odium among its *confrères*, that our recurring to the subject on the present occasion seems but the simplest justice.

It is right, however, to state at the same time, that the highly respectable house of D'Almaine and Co. have, from even a period before our first allusion to the subject, been making movements towards a popularisation of the pianoforte. An upright instrument of elegant structure in rosewood, with metallic plate, and a keyboard extending to  $6\frac{1}{2}$  octaves, has for several years been made by them, at thirty guineas. Since the end of last year, the price of this instrument, for the excellence of which we have seen high testimonies, has been reduced to twenty-five guineas. We find that our friend Mr Purdie of Edinburgh makes similar instruments at the same price. D'Almaine and Co. have even succeeded in producing instruments in fine cases, which they will be able to offer at twenty guineas, or, if successful with a contemplated substitute for ivory, at twenty pounds, the latter being the price which we have ideally set up as that which would secure a great extension of the use of the instrument among the middle classes of the people.

In the choice of a pianoforte, so much must depend on the character of the maker for giving assurance of quality and durability, that the productions of makers as yet devoid of a name are generally felt to be unworthy of consideration. Nevertheless, having expressed a desire to see pianofortes brought down to *twenty pounds*, we feel bound to notice the first intimation which reached us of this being accomplished. Mr Thomas Fisher of Gower Street, Bedford Square, having informed us that he has made a  $6\frac{1}{2}$  piccolo, with metallic plate, pine case French polished, and the usual furnishings, at twenty pounds, we requested a friend of adequate skill to examine it and report. The report is as follows:—“It is a very good school-room piano, suitable for rough usage. The tone is clear, full, and rather loud than otherwise—something like the old-fashioned upright pianos. It wants in softness and richness, and would be more fitted for hard practising than for drawing-room music, or as an accompaniment to the voice. The appearance of the instrument is quite plain, though not inelegant. Altogether it would be a most useful instrument where the modern refinements of tone were not required.”

#### PRECAUTIONS AGAINST DISASTERS AT SEA.

The loss of so many lives by the sinking of the *Orion* steamer has, as usual in such cases, forcibly turned the attention of the public to means of prevention and remedy.

We fear it is almost vain to think of regulations against such disasters. Were there a liability to a very frequent running of valuable vessels on rocky coasts in the most favourable circumstances for keeping a safe course, it might be possible to regulate with advantage; but such accidents being rare even under the present imperfect arrangements, it appears to be impossible to sustain a proper amount of vigilance and care in the case. It is from this cause that sailors never have the idea of danger or possible disaster before them. Each feels that he never yet has been drowned, and hence he argues how unlikely it is that the circumstances which produce drowning are to take place before tomorrow. Were he, on the contrary, to be drowned once a week for two months, one can imagine him taking precautions so as not to be drowned above once a month for the future. Unfortunately for him, he cannot be drowned above once, and that is so seldom that the idea has no effect upon him. So it is with other dangers. We have been told by a gentleman who once crossed the Atlantic in a first-class steamer, that, considering the carelessness he saw in the use of lights by the crew and servants, it was a perfect marvel to him that the ship was not burnt. Each sailor, we presume, reflects that he never yet has been in a ship that took fire at sea, and that therefore it is very unlikely he ever will. Against a contingency so exceedingly slender, human foresight does not work. A vessel takes fire now and then, and the effects are dreadful. But the

sufferers are beyond benefiting by experience, and, as for others, why they all along knew that such a thing does happen occasionally, and they now feel that it is as remotely possible in their particular case as ever.

In the case of the *Orion* one circumstance was highly characteristic. The boats were quite unready to be let down into the sea to save the passengers, and, accordingly, one of them being to be disengaged only by cutting the fastenings, it went down end foremost, and cast a multitude of people into the water. Did any one ever see the boats in a better state of preparation? Our recollections of them in general bring them before our mind's eye as filled with barrels or other packages, as if the officers and crew (and this we believe to be the general case) despised the precaution of taking boats for the saving of lives in case of shipwreck, and, submitting to the taking of them with reluctance, were determined to signify for them all possible contempt.

While it may be difficult, or almost impossible, from the nature of the case, to keep up a vitality in any regulations for the protection of life at sea, there is nothing to prevent passengers from taking a precaution which, in a large class of cases, may prove the means of saving their lives. A swimming-belt, effectual for sustaining a full-grown person in the water, can be had for nine or ten shillings, and it does not take up more space in a carpet-bag than a night-shirt. The utility of this simple article has been often pointed out, and it is to be seen in shop-windows in almost every large town; yet its serviceableness does not seem to have been generally apprehended; otherwise we should surely have heard of some one of the unfortunate passengers by the *Orion* having been fortunately possessed of such an article. On that disastrous occasion, the circumstances were precisely those in which a swimming-belt can be used advantageously, the whole necessity being a mere sustentation of the person in the water till help should arrive. Yet not one of the hundred and thirty passengers had taken this simple precaution. The result was that wild scene of helpless struggling in the water, from which it seems a wonder that any one besides the few able to swim should have escaped. The loss of the *Pegasus* in July 1846 was a precisely similar case. In a calm sea, on a summer night, close upon shore, every one of the passengers would have been almost sure of escaping to land if provided with this simple and inexpensive contrivance. After that sad affair, the newspapers were clamorous for air-cushions and life-buoys being carried in every steamer, as a provision against this class of accidents; but time passed on—and the suggestion was forgotten with the circumstances which had called it forth.

#### A STRANGER CHALLENGED.

What right, we should like to know, has the word ‘party’ to come in and usurp the place of the good old word ‘person’? There is no such thing as a person or an individual now. The abstract idea of a human being is for the present to be described as ‘a party.’ We used to regard the word party long ago as usually a plurality—an assemblage. For example, a marriage-party, a dinner-party, a whist-party. Now the idea is concentrated into a single person. We hear of a party thrown from a currie, and think of a number of people hurt in consequence; when, behold, the party is only one, and he escapes with a few bruises about the head. A house is for sale, and the agent tells us that several parties have been inquiring after it, as if people came in troops, when the fact is, they came but single spies at the most. A waiter at your hotel tells you there are several parties in the public-room: you go in expecting a crowd, when behold there are only three gentlemen, each sitting at a separate table, and the whole making a sufficiently meagre show. There is a provoking dubiety in all this, and the more provoking that it is unnecessary, seeing that there can be no sort of objection to the use of the proper word person.

The misuse of the word party took its rise a few

years ago in mercantile circles. It is often, of course, necessary in such quarters to speak of bargains or negotiations, in which cases there are always two parties concerned. Here the word is rightly used, whether there be one or more men on each side. It may be A and B against C, when of course A and B form the one party in the affair, and C, singly by himself, the other. Mercantile men, having so often occasion to speak of individuals in this way as parties, came at length to lose sight of the distinction between the two, and used the word party for individual on all occasions, whether right or wrong. This, however, should be resisted in literature, and even in conversation, as a vulgarism, and we proclaim war against it accordingly.

#### STATE OF AMERICAN AGRICULTURE.

At a late meeting of a farmer's club in Berwickshire, Professor Johnston gave an account of a tour which he had recently made in North America with a view to ascertain the state of agriculture in that quarter of the world. An abstract of his observations will be read with interest during the present contentions on rural matters :—

The professor mentioned that the state of agriculture in the northern parts of America, in our own provinces, and in New England, was generally what the state of agriculture in Scotland probably was eighty or ninety years ago. In some parts of New Brunswick they are very nearly in the precise condition in which Scotland was 120 years ago. Go as far west as you like, and as far south as you like, the same general description applies to the whole. In regard to the cultivation of land in America, its condition arises from a variety of causes, and very few considerations will enable you to understand how it has come about. If you ask yourselves to what class does the majority of emigrants belong, you will have no difficulty in coming to a conclusion. Look at the great crowds of people who go from Ireland, from the Highlands of Scotland, and the hundreds of thousands proceeding from the great towns of England and Scotland—ask yourselves of what class they consist—what amount of intelligence and agricultural knowledge they possess; and in the answer to this you will at once find the key to the state of the land in the whole northern part of America. Now, what has been their procedure—by what kind of procedure have they brought about the state of exhaustion to which the soil has been reduced? Of course in speaking of the exhausted soil he did not refer to the virgin soil which had never received the plough or the spade, but to the soil under their cultivation, and which they were now exhausting. The forest was in the first place cut down and burned, after which the ashes were scattered, and a crop of wheat and oats was sown; when this crop was cut down another was sown; but they did not always remove the straw—they do not trouble themselves with any manure. The second year they sowed it again, and harrowed it, and generally took three crops in succession. When they can take no more out of it, they either sow grass seeds, or, as frequently, let it seed itself. They will then sometimes cut hay for twelve, fourteen, sixteen, eighteen, or twenty years in succession; in fact, so long as they can even get half-a-ton an acre from it. The land was then broken up, and a crop of oats taken—then potatoes—then a crop of wheat—and then hay for twelve years again; and so the same course was repeated. Now this was the way in which this land was treated; this was the way in which the exhaustion is brought about. This exhaustion existed in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Lower Canada, in Upper Canada to a considerable extent, over the whole of New England,

and extended even into the state of New York. Well, but what steps were they taking to remedy this state of things? Were they doing anything to bring back the land to a productive condition? and in order to do this, were they taking steps to put any knowledge into the heads of those who cultivate it? Now on those points he was happy to say that he could speak very favourably. But what inducement had they to make these exertions? They grow corn enough—they have no want of agricultural produce as we have: but when he told them what was the condition of New England in reference to the Western States they would understand. All the new states—all the virgin land where wheat was cultivated—yielded a crop for little or nothing, but it could not yield by any means a large crop. In the state of Michigan, between Lake Superior and Erie, the average produce was not twelve bushels an acre; but it was got for nothing. In New Brunswick, which was very thinly populated, he was told that ten bushels an acre paid well—but the produce was not large. In the Western States they were unable to produce it very cheaply. At the time I was there the prices varied from 60 to 80 cents a bushel—that is, 100 cents being 4s. 4d. In the extensive Western States and part of New York, where it was shipped to England, the price varied according to the distance. Now, the condition of things in the Western States in reference to England was precisely the same as the condition of England in reference to the wheat-producing countries of the Baltic. The condition of the farmers was exceedingly bad, and in Maine he was informed that they were all in a state of bankruptcy. The land was all mortgaged, which hung like a millstone round their necks, and was worse even than the state of the farmers in this country. They were thus unable to compete with the western parts of New York or Lake Ontario. They had all heard of the famous wheat of Genessee, where the land was more fertile than in any part of Great Britain, and he learned there that they were laying the land down to grass, because they could not afford to grow wheat. As a remedy for this state of things they were establishing agricultural societies in the different states, and the legislature was providing funds to support these societies and for the diffusion of knowledge. Let him now come to another point of great importance, and to which they would perhaps like him to advert—namely, what will be the effect of an improved condition of agriculture in America upon us—what influence will the growth of wheat in the States have upon us—or what influence is the progress in agriculture, consequent on this great desire for improvement, likely to have upon the state of agriculture in Great Britain? In New Brunswick, New England, Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and New York, the growth of wheat has almost ceased; and it is now gradually receding farther and farther westward. Now when he told them this, they would see that what he believed to be the case was really the case: that it would not be very long before America would be unable—in fact the United States were unable now—to supply us with wheat in any large quantity. If we could bring Indian corn into general use we might get plenty of it; but he did not think that the United States need be made any bugbear to them. He believed the great source of competition they would have to contend with was the Baltic and the countries on the borders of the Black Sea. Now, in regard to the other point—namely, what effect will the desire for improvement in agriculture have upon the agriculture of this country?—it ought to stimulate us to still greater exertion. Sure he was, that with proper exertion, we would always keep a-head of them. There was as good blood in this country as ever went out of it. He hoped English and Scotch heads and hearts would not become languid and dull on a matter of such moment as this, but that they would continue to beat them, as he was sure, from what he had seen, that they were able. What the Americans did well, we ought to be able to do better.'

## THE ANGLO-SAXON RACE.

In 1620 the Anglo-Saxon race numbered about 6,000,000, and was confined to England, Wales, and Scotland; and the combination of which it is the result was not then more than half perfected, for neither Wales nor Scotland was half-Saxonised at the time. Now it numbers 60,000,000 of human beings, planted upon all the islands and continents of the earth, and increasing everywhere by an intense ratio of progression. It is fast absorbing or displacing all the sluggish races or barbarous tribes of men that have occupied the continents of America, Africa, Asia, and the islands of the ocean. If no great physical revolution supervene to check its propagation, it will number 800,000,000 of human beings in less than 150 years from the present time—all speaking the same language, centred to the same literature and religion, and exhibiting all its inherent and inalienable characteristics. Thus the population of the earth is fast becoming Anglo-Saxonised by blood. But the English language is more self-expansive and aggressive than the blood of that race. When a community begins to speak the English language it is half-Saxonised, even if not a drop of the Anglo-Saxon blood runs in its veins. Ireland was never colonised from England like North America or Australia, but nearly the whole of its 7,000,000 or 8,000,000 already speak the English language, which is in the preparatory state to being entirely absorbed into the Anglo-Saxon race, as one of its most vigorous and useful elements. Everywhere the English language is gaining upon the languages of the earth, and preparing those who speak for this absorption. The young generation of the East Indies is learning it; and it is probable that within fifty years 65,000,000 of human beings of the Asiatic race will speak the language on that continent. So it is in the United States. About 50,000 emigrants from Germany and other countries of continental Europe are arriving in this country every year. Perhaps they cannot speak a word of English when they first land on our shores; but in the course of a few years they master the language to some extent. Their children sit upon the same benches in our common schools with those of native Americans, and become, as they grow up and diffuse themselves among the rest of the population, completely Anglo-Saxonised. Thus the race is fast occupying, and subduing to its genius, all the continents and islands of the earth. The grandson of many a young man who reads these lines will probably live to see the day when that race will number its 800,000,000 of human beings. Their unity, harmony, and brotherhood must be determined by the relations between Great Britain and the United States. Their union will be the union of the two worlds. If they discharge their duty to each other and to mankind, they must become the united heart of the mighty race they represent, feeding its myriad veins with the blood of moral and political life. Upon the state of their fellowship, then, more than upon the union of any two nations on earth, depends the well-being of humanity, and the peace and progress of the world.—*American paper.*

## RATS FOR THE TABLE.

There are parts of the world besides China where even rats are eaten, and such rats as would astonish those accustomed to the British species, which, take even the largest, are Lilliputian as compared with a native of the East Indies, first satisfactorily described by General Hardwicke in the seventh volume of the 'Linnean Transactions.' The specimen he described was a female, and weighed two pounds eleven ounces and a-half; its total length being two feet two inches and a-quarter. He assures us that the male grows larger, and weighs three pounds and upwards; so that the natives have before them on table an animal as large as a wild rabbit, and doubtless, as they have no prejudices or scruples, just as palatable.—*White's Popular History of Mammalia.*

## PROGRESS.

There is nothing so revolutionary, because there is nothing so unnatural and so convulsive to society, as the strain to keep things *fixed*, when all the world is, by the very law of its creation, in eternal *progress*; and the cause of all the evils in the world may be traced to that natural, but most deadly error of human indolence and corruption—that our business is to *preserve*, and not to *improve*. It is the ruin of us all alike, individuals, schools, and nations.—*Dr Arnold.*

## THE NECROMANCY OF THE PAST.

BY CALDER CAMPBELL.

Fruits seem sweeter when the season  
Of their flourishing is o'er;  
Scenes are fairer, for the reason  
That we ne'er may see them more.  
Oft amid an orchard, swelling  
With red, fragrant apples, I  
Languish for that Indian dwelling  
Where my eager youth went by:  
Languij for the mangoes golden—  
Sweet guavas, pink at core—  
Or pomegranates, inward holding  
Crimson kernels in rich store!  
Papaws, in the sunshine, yellow,  
Clustering thick 'neath foliage broad—  
Plantains, primrose-hued and mellow—  
Tamarinds that shroud the road;  
Custard-apples, white and milky,  
With a food most like their name—  
Sweet rose-apples, odorous, silky,  
On a tree of stalwart frame;  
Figs, the coolest fruit that quench  
Feaver'd lips 'neath tropic skies;  
And such flowers as no dew drenches  
'Neath our northern Flora's eyes!

Wherefore prize the things we have not  
Thus above what we possess?  
These were mine, yet then they gave not  
To the mind contented ease!  
In those days, I do remember  
How I longed for British land;  
The very snows of home's December  
Warmed 'neath fancy's genial hand!  
Cowslips from the mead, primroses  
Gathered from the hillsides dew,  
More I prized than brightest posies  
Gleaned 'neath skies of cloudless blue!  
When the babol's perfumed blossoms  
Swung their gold-like tassels near,  
I bethought me of kind bosoms  
Decked with pinks and violets dear;  
And the moogra, white and fragrant,  
Twined 'mid hair as black as night,  
Seemed to fancy's dreams vagrant  
Neither half so sweet or bright  
As the snowy lilies, measured  
In our early summer day:  
Ah! how seldom things are measured  
Justly, till they pass away!

For the absent ever longing;  
On the past still heapings praise;  
Bitterly the present wronging  
With complaint's incense laid;  
We but throw athwart the future  
Shadows, sure to brood when all  
Echo's sweetest songs are muted  
Than lone Silence in her hall!  
Why is this? Why place such value  
On life's vainly-squared gold?  
Why, when gentle voices call you,  
Turn to those now dumb and cold?  
Why, when evening's shadows round us  
Paint the fields of youth no more,  
Scorn the wreaths that may have crowned us  
For the thorns within their core?  
Subtleties of the affections  
We may question, ay in vain,  
Making still our heart-elections  
'Gainst decisions of the brain.  
God hath given us tastes and feelings;  
And to regulate their choice  
We must look for such revelations  
*As His* will alone employs!

Theories that prize of reason  
As a study taught by men,  
Are like sudden schemes of treason  
Planned within a lion's den:  
One fierce, passionate experience  
Proves how fallacies are crushed,  
Just as traitor-tongues, at variance,  
'Neath the lion's paws are hushed!  
Love, and joy, and innocent likings,  
Have their laws for hearts, not heads:  
The spider web of metaphysics  
Honest feeling tears to shreds!

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